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Voices from the Classroom: Students' Perceptions of the English Day Program at Putra Harapan Boarding School

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Abstract: This study aims to identify students' perceptions of the English Day Program (EDP) at Putra Harapan Boarding School in Purwokerto that they encountered during the program and to explore students' responses to this program. A mixed-method approach was used, consisting of quantitative methods collected through closed questionnaires from students in grades 7 to 9 using Google Forms, as well as qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews with 13 selected students from each class. The results showed that the EDP was well received, with 84.33% positive responses indicating high enthusiasm and motivation, highlighting increased confidence and future opportunities, showing good support. These conclusions indicate that students have a positive view of the English Day Program. They believe that the program increases their enthusiasm and motivation, improves their English speaking skills, and creates a more supportive and enjoyable learning environment.

Keywords: Student's Perceptions, English Day Program, Speaking skill

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Introduction

In the era of globalization, foreign language proficiency has become an essential competency for individuals to participate effectively in international communication and multicultural environments. The ability to communicate in a foreign language enables individuals to access global information, establish cross-cultural relationships, and engage in various academic and professional opportunities (Fang, 2017). Among the many languages used worldwide, English occupies a particularly important position as a global lingua franca in education, business, technology, and international communication. Consequently, English proficiency has become a fundamental requirement for individuals seeking to compete and collaborate in a rapidly interconnected world (Reddy, 2016).

Among the four language skills, speaking is widely recognized as one of the most important yet challenging competencies for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Speaking serves not only as a means of conveying ideas, opinions, and emotions but also as a key indicator of language mastery and communicative competence (Brown, 2007). Furthermore, speaking proficiency contributes to learners' ability to adapt to new social environments, participate in academic discussions, and develop

professional opportunities (Wilson, 1968). Despite its significance, many EFL learners continue to encounter difficulties in developing speaking skills due to limited opportunities for authentic communication, anxiety, and a lack of confidence when using English in real-life situations.

To address these challenges, educational institutions have implemented various communicative language-learning strategies that encourage students to use English actively both inside and outside the classroom. One strategy that has gained considerable attention is the English Day Program, which encourages students to communicate in English on designated days within the school environment. The program aims to increase students' exposure to English, promote meaningful communication, and create opportunities for regular speaking practice (Higgins & Sharma, 2016). The implementation of English Day is closely associated with the principles of immersion learning, which emphasize that language acquisition is more effective when learners are exposed to the target language in natural and meaningful contexts (Krashen, 1982). Through continuous exposure and interaction, students are expected to improve their speaking fluency, confidence, and overall communicative competence.

Previous studies have reported positive outcomes regarding the implementation of English Day and similar immersion-based language programs. Research has shown that regular exposure to English communication activities can enhance students' speaking proficiency, increase motivation, and strengthen self-confidence in using English (Swan, 2005). Tathahira & Nahrisya (2020) found that students generally perceived English Day positively because it provided a supportive environment for practicing speaking without excessive pressure. Similarly, Beay et al. (2023) reported that collaborative language-learning activities not only improved speaking skills but also fostered communication, teamwork, and independent learning abilities. These findings suggest that English Day has considerable potential as an effective strategy for supporting speaking development in EFL contexts.

However, despite these positive findings, several studies have identified challenges that may hinder the effectiveness of English Day implementation. Students often experience speaking anxiety, lack of confidence, low motivation, and discomfort when required to communicate exclusively in English (Aditama et al., 2025). Sinaga (2018) reported that some students demonstrated inconsistent participation due to previous negative experiences with language programs. In addition, Ramadhani & Muslim (2021) argued that the success of English-speaking programs depends not only on the frequency of language practice but also on institutional support, teacher guidance, and appropriate implementation strategies. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of English Day may vary depending on the educational context and learners' individual experiences.

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of English Day programs, several limitations remain evident. Most studies have primarily focused on measuring language outcomes or identifying implementation obstacles without exploring students' perceptions comprehensively. Furthermore, relatively few studies have employed mixed-method approaches to investigate how students perceive the effectiveness of English Day while simultaneously examining the factors that influence their participation and speaking development. Research conducted in boarding school environments is also still limited, despite the unique characteristics of such institutions, where students experience extended exposure to language-learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. Consequently, a more comprehensive investigation of students' perceptions is needed to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of English Day implementation in boarding school settings.

SMP Boarding School Putra Harapan Purwokerto is one of the educational institutions that has implemented the English Day Program to improve students' speaking skills. The program creates opportunities for students to engage in English communication through daily conversations, group discussions, presentations, and other interactive activities. The boarding school environment provides continuous exposure to English, allowing students to practice the language more frequently than in conventional school settings. Therefore, this context offers a valuable opportunity to examine how students perceive the implementation of English Day and how these perceptions relate to their speaking development.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate students' perceptions of the implementation of the English Day Program in improving speaking skills at SMP Boarding School Putra Harapan Purwokerto. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study seeks to explore students'

experiences, motivations, perceived benefits, and challenges associated with the program. By providing a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions within a boarding school context, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable English-speaking programs and offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers in English language education.

Literature Review

The English Day Program is a language-learning strategy that encourages students to use English in daily communication within the school environment. The program aims to increase students' exposure to English and provide opportunities for authentic language practice. Its implementation is closely associated with the immersion learning approach, which emphasizes that language acquisition occurs more effectively when learners are exposed to meaningful communication in the target language (Krashen, 1982). Through regular interaction in English, students are expected to improve their fluency, confidence, and communicative competence.

Students' perception plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of educational programs. Perception refers to the process through which individuals interpret and give meaning to experiences and environmental stimuli. According to Robbins (2003), perception is influenced by three factors: the perceiver, the target, and the situation. In the context of this study, these dimensions are used to understand how students interpret and evaluate the implementation of the English Day Program.

Speaking is one of the productive language skills that enables learners to express ideas, opinions, and feelings through verbal communication. Brown (2007) defines speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning through language use. However, many EFL learners encounter difficulties in developing speaking skills due to limited opportunities for practice, lack of confidence, and speaking anxiety. Therefore, programs that provide authentic communication opportunities are considered essential for improving students' speaking proficiency.

Previous studies have generally reported positive impacts of English Day on students' speaking development. Tathahira & Nahrissa (2020) found that students perceived English Day as a supportive environment for practicing English, while Maulidiyah & Affifa (2022) reported improvements in speaking ability through increased language exposure. However, other studies identified challenges such as low confidence, anxiety, and inconsistent participation among students (Aditama et al., 2025; Sinaga, 2018). These findings indicate that students' perceptions may influence the effectiveness of English Day implementation. Therefore, this study employs Robbins (2003) perception framework to examine students' perceptions of the English Day Program and its contribution to the development of speaking skills at SMP Boarding School Putra Harapan Purwokerto.

Research Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate students' perceptions of the implementation of the English Day Program in improving speaking skills. The mixed-methods design was chosen because it integrates quantitative and qualitative data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires using a survey approach to identify students' perceptions of the program, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews to support and enrich the survey findings (Sugiyono, 2013).

Participants

This study was conducted at SMP Asrama Putra Harapan in Purwokerto. The study participants included all students at SMP Putra Harapan, for a total of 108 students. A questionnaire was distributed to all students in grades 7 through 9 to gather quantitative data regarding their perceptions of the program. Additionally, a purposive sample of students was selected for qualitative research; 13 students were chosen for interviews to gain deeper insights into their experiences, motivations, and challenges related to English Day activities.

Data Collection

Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire employed a Likert-scale format to measure students' perceptions of the English Day Program based on the dimensions of perceiver, target, and situation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' opinions and experiences in greater depth. Documentation was also used to support the research findings and provide contextual information regarding the implementation of the program.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the overall tendencies of students' perceptions. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a comprehensive interpretation of students' perceptions of the English Day Program and its contribution to speaking skill development.

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study on Students' Perceptions of the English Day Program at Boarding School at Putra Harapan Purwokerto. The findings, derived from questionnaire and interview data, are presented based on three indicators of perception: motivation to learn English, suitability to students' learning objectives, and suitability of the learning situation.

1. The Role of the Daily English Program in Motivating Students to Learn English

The findings indicate that students perceived the English Day Program (EDP) as an effective program for enhancing their motivation and confidence in learning English. Table 1. shows that students generally had positive perceptions of the motivational aspects of the English Day Program (EDP), with an overall agreement rate of 85.77%. The highest level of agreement was found in students' enthusiasm for learning English during EDP (95.88%), indicating that the program successfully encouraged students' interest in learning English. In addition, 84.54% of students agreed that EDP increased their confidence in speaking English. However, enjoyment in conversing with peers in English received the lowest level of agreement (67.01%), suggesting that some students still experienced difficulties when interacting in English with their classmates.

Interview findings supported the questionnaire results, revealing that students became more interested in learning English after participating in EDP activities. Overall, the findings indicate that EDP positively contributed to students' motivation and confidence in learning and using English.

Tabel 1. The Role of the Daily English Program in Motivating Students to Learn English

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
1	I'm very enthusiastic about studying English during the EDP.	19 (19,59%)	74 (76,29%)	3 (3,09%)	1 (1,03%)
2	I enjoy chatting in English with my friends during the EDP.	13 (13,40%)	52 (53,61%)	30 (30,93%)	2 (2,06%)
3	I'm interested in EDP at my school.	29 (29,90%)	60 (61,86%)	8 (8,25%)	0 (0,00%)

4	EDP made English more interesting to me.	29 (29,90%)	58 (59,79%)	10 (10,31%)	0 (0,00%)
5	EDP makes me confident to speak English.	18 (18,56%)	64 (65,98%)	12 (12,37%)	3 (3,09%)

2. Alignment of the English Day Program with Student Learning Goals

The findings indicate that students perceived the English Day Program (EDP) as highly relevant to their learning goals and future aspirations, with an overall agreement rate of 94.85%.

The highest agreement was found in the belief that EDP could support opportunities to study abroad and travel internationally (96.91%). Additionally, 95.88% agreed that English proficiency gained through EDP would help them obtain better career opportunities, while 94.85% believed that EDP improved their speaking skills. The use of English for social media communication also received a positive response, with 89.69% agreement.

Interview findings supported the questionnaire results, showing that EDP helped students become more fluent, confident, and willing to communicate in English. Overall, students viewed EDP as an important program that supports their educational, professional, and communication goals.

Tabel 2. Alignment of the English Day Program with Student Learning Goals

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
6	I hope because of EDP I could study abroad.	53 (54,64%)	41 (42,27%)	3 (3,09%)	0 (0,00%)
7	I hope because of EDP I could travel around the world.	49 (50,52%)	45 (46,39%)	3 (3,09%)	0 (0,00%)
8	I must master English during the EDP to get a good job.	38 (39,18%)	55 (56,70%)	4 (4,12%)	0 (0,00%)
9	I wish EDP support my speaking skill.	41 (42,27%)	51 (52,58%)	3 (3,09%)	2 (2,06%)
10	Studying English during the EDP support me to chat in social media.	34 (35,05%)	53 (54,64%)	10 (10,31%)	0 (0,00%)

3. Suitability of the Learning Situation in the Daily English Program

The findings related to the learning environment and situational factors supporting the implementation of the English Day Program (EDP) showed generally positive perceptions among students, with an overall agreement rate of 72.37%.

The highest agreement was found in the statement that EDP supports school activities (89.69%), followed by the perception that the program is conducted on time (78.35%). Teachers' use of English during EDP was also viewed positively (72.16%). However, peer use of English received the lowest agreement rate (55.67%), while only 65.98% of students reported actively speaking English during the program.

Interview data supported these findings, indicating that students felt more confident speaking English when their peers were supportive and non-judgmental.

Tabel 3. Suitability of the Learning Situation in the Daily English Program

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
11	The EDP runs on time	14 (14,43%)	62 (63,92%)	21 (21,65%)	0 (0,00%)
12	The EDP supports my school activities.	17 (17,53%)	70 (72,16%)	10 (10,31%)	0 (0,00%)
13	My teachers speak English during the EDP.	13 (13,40%)	57 (58,76%)	25 (25,77%)	2 (2,06%)
14	My friends speak English during the EDP.	8 (8,25%)	46 (47,42%)	41 (42,27%)	2 (2,06%)
15	I actively speak English during the EDP.	11 (11,34%)	53 (54,64%)	31 (31,96%)	2 (2,06%)

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the English Day Program (EDP) contributes positively to students' motivation to learn and practice English. The high level of enthusiasm and confidence reported by students suggests that the program creates a supportive atmosphere that encourages language learning. This result supports Krashen (1982) Affective Filter Theory, which states that positive emotions and low anxiety facilitate language acquisition. Furthermore, the increase in students' confidence in speaking English is consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986), who argue that supportive learning environments can reduce foreign language anxiety and encourage oral participation. However, the lower level of enjoyment in conversing with peers indicates that some students still experience hesitation when using English in social interactions, possibly due to fear of making mistakes or limited vocabulary. Therefore, greater attention should be given to providing opportunities for meaningful peer communication.

The findings also reveal that students perceive the EDP as highly relevant to their learning goals and future aspirations. Students' strong agreement regarding opportunities to study abroad, travel internationally, and obtain better career prospects reflects their awareness of the importance of English in a globalized world. This finding is in line with Crystal (2003) and Graddol (2006), who describe English as a global language that facilitates international communication and mobility. Likewise, students' perceptions of English as an important skill for future employment support Jenkins (2009) view of English as a key medium of global communication. The positive responses regarding speaking-skill development and increased confidence further indicate that students view EDP as a practical platform for improving oral communication skills. These results suggest that EDP is not only valued as a school activity but also as a program that supports students' long-term educational and professional goals.

In addition, the findings show that the learning environment created through EDP is generally supportive of English language use. Positive perceptions regarding program implementation, school support, and teachers' use of English indicate that the program has been successfully integrated into the school environment. Teachers' role as language models appears to contribute to the creation of an immersive atmosphere that encourages language learning. Nevertheless, the relatively low level of peer interaction and active English use among students suggests that institutional support alone is not

sufficient to ensure consistent language practice. This finding supports Richards & Rodgers (2014), who emphasize the importance of peer interaction in immersion-based language learning. Interview responses further demonstrate that students are more willing to speak English when their peers are supportive and non-judgmental. Therefore, collaborative speaking activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and peer tutoring may help increase students' participation and active use of English during the program.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that the English Day Program plays a significant and positive role in enhancing students' speaking skills at SMP Boarding School "Putra Harapan" Purwokerto. The program successfully creates an immersive and supportive learning environment that encourages students to actively use English in daily interactions. Through regular exposure and practice, students experience increased motivation, confidence, and willingness to speak English, which are essential components of effective language acquisition. These results support the theory of immersion learning, which emphasizes that consistent exposure to the target language in meaningful contexts can enhance speaking proficiency.

The study also concludes that students perceive the English Day Program as being closely aligned with their academic goals and future aspirations. Students recognize English as an important tool for higher education, career development, international communication, and global mobility. This awareness strengthens their motivation to participate in English Day activities and to improve their speaking skills. The program not only supports linguistic development but also contributes to the development of broader competencies such as communication, collaboration, and self-confidence, which are crucial in facing the challenges of globalization.

Overall, this study contributes to the field of English language learning by providing evidence that an immersion-based school program can support students' speaking skill development while fostering positive attitudes toward English learning and future-oriented language use.

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